



CHRS

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

News

April 2024

CHRS Supports the Protecting Historic Homes Amendment Act of 2023

By Beth Purcell

Councilmember Allen and two sponsors have introduced the Protecting Historic Homes Amendment Act of 2023, a bill which would increase the penalties for “substantial” illegal demolition. The current fines are less than \$5000 for a first offense, no matter the size or value of the property. CHRS strongly supports this bill and offered suggestions to clarify the definition of “substantial damage,” “substantial structural damage,” and “substantial demolition.”

Illegal demolition can rob communities of important historic structures. Following are two examples from Capitol Hill:

326 A Street SE, HPA 17-591. This pre-Civil War house was to be preserved (it was once the home of Contantino Brumidi, the artist responsible for many of the frescoes inside the US Capitol building), but during restoration, three walls fell, a stop work order was issued, and the owner and contractor were fined a nominal amount. HPO inspected the demolition and halted the work until the project applicant and contractor submit for review and approval updated demolition plans showing the

extent of demolition and HPO later signed off on the reconstruction permit and the stop work order was lifted. Eventually the project was completed.

639 A Street SE, HPA 22-277, May 2022, HPA 23-239, 2023. This two-story two-bay porch-front frame house, apparently one of a pair, was built in 1874 or earlier. Renovation plans called for a rear and side addition. HPRB approved the plans in 2022. But on March 17, 2023 a stop work order was issued for work exceeding the scope of the permit—demolishing the entire house—only the façade remained. At an HPRB hearing on June 1, 2023, the contractor testified that he encountered unexpected safety problems, did not notify the project architect about these problems, and removed rotted fabric. The Board stated that it is the owner’s responsibility to report and correct problems, and that unexpected situations arise in many projects. It is not the building inspector’s responsibility to find problems.

The Board also noted that the photographs in the file showed that not all the fabric removed was rotted, that the demolition was “a real shame,”

and that fines (said to be approximately \$4,000 by one witness) should be high enough to deter violations. Because the plans were essentially the same as the plans that the Board approved in 2022 we supported the project which the Board approved “holding our nose.”

For prior coverage, see *CHRS News* July–August 2023 and May 2019. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.

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It's Almost House & Garden Tour Time!

By Fynnette Eaton

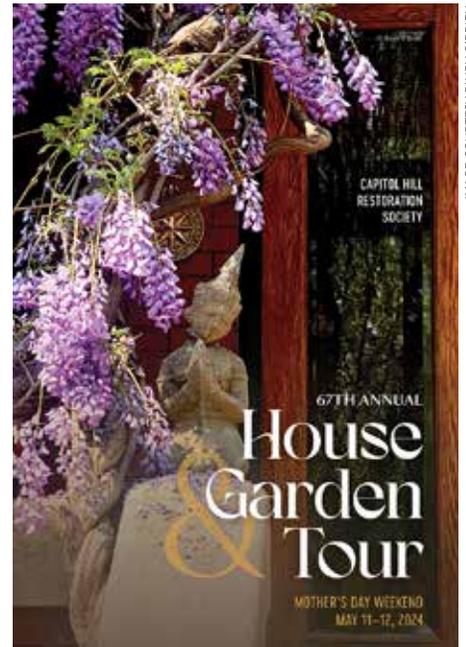
The 2024 CHRS House and Garden Tour has a wonderful mix of homes. This year we include two homes owned by interior decorators, each with their own particular sense of style. We have two homes that have very recently been fully renovated—one a jewel box, the second large and spacious. We also have two homes that are so very different inside from what you would expect on the outside, one of which includes a running stream in a hidden garden. And of course we have beautiful, traditional “Capitol Hill Homes” with deep gardens and grand high ceilings.

The footprint for this year's tour is 13th Street NE to the east, 5th Street SE to the west, 8th Street NE to the north and Pennsylvania Avenue to the south. The hours are 4–7 pm on Saturday, May 11 and 1–5 pm on

Sunday, May 12. There will be multiple locations to check in to receive your entry wristband, which we will list on the Eventbrite ticket page.

As we did in 2023, we will offer a refreshment break and architectural tours at the Hill Center. This year also includes other public places to explore and take a break along the tour route—the historic Capitol Hill Baptist Church and the Quaker Meeting House.

Tickets are available on Eventbrite and at chrs.org; all members will receive their promo code in advance via email—please call the office if you have not received yours. Advance tickets are \$30 for members (unlimited) and \$40 for non-members; \$50 on tour weekend. **Tickets sold out in 2023**—please buy yours in advance! ★



More information and photos of the homes will be in the May CHRS News.

Call for Volunteers

By Angie Schmidt

The House & Garden Tour is CHRS's main fundraising event, which allows us to print this newsletter, rent space in which to hold our events like membership meetings and the House Expo, and maintain our office space where we keep historic documents and our educational materials. Your participation is essential to making the Tour a success.

Many types of help will be needed prior to the Tour and during the Tour weekend. Most important are the docents needed to staff the houses to make the experience enjoyable for our guests and secure for our hosts. We

will provide training, so no experience is required. All docents will be able to visit the other tour stops for free during the Tour weekend and also be invited to the President's Party in June.

We also need people to hang/display posters, promote the event on weekends at our Eastern Market kiosk (or through your own social media networks) and other assorted tasks, including photography. To volunteer for any of these activities, contact the House Tour Committee at caphillhousetour@gmail.com or leave a message at (202) 543-0425. ★

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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To reach any of the above, please contact the CHRS office at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail at: caphrs420@gmail.com.

ABOUT CHRS

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society is a nonprofit, volunteer organization devoted to protecting, preserving, and celebrating our historic Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Founded in 1955, CHRS is a pioneer in the urban preservation movement. CHRS was instrumental in securing Capitol Hill's designation in 1976 as a national historic district. Since then, CHRS has worked continuously to protect historic spaces and to enhance life on the Hill.

CHRS is driven by members who love their neighborhood and want to preserve and share the dynamic story of Capitol Hill for future generations. Come join us!

Learn more and join at chrs.org

Zoning Report

By Nick Alberti

On March 6, 2024, five members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met to discuss four cases. Representatives from three cases participated to present their proposals. The Committee voted to support three cases and to oppose one case.

BZA #21071, 1432 F Street NE.

The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's request for a special exception from the rear yard requirements and the lot occupancy requirements to construct a two-story rear addition to an existing, attached, two-story with cellar principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The applicant is proposing to remove an existing porch, which is in a state of disrepair, and to replace it with an open porch with retractable screens. Lot occupancy will be reduced from 73.3% to 70% (60% allowable as matter-of-right) and the rear yard will be essentially unchanged (existing 14.7' to proposed 14.42').

Three letters of support from neighbors have been filed, including from both adjacent neighbors. The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for March 27, 2024.

BZA #21084, 808 I Street NE. The committee voted to oppose (0-5) the applicant's request for a special exception from the rear addition requirements and lot occupancy requirements to construct a third story and rear addition to an existing, attached, two-story with cellar principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The applicant is proposing to expand the footprint of the first and second floors and to construct a new third floor with patio space. The applicant's addition will increase lot occupancy from 43% to 68.8% and would allow

the rear wall of the building to be constructed more than 20 feet beyond the rear wall of an adjacent neighbor.

The Committee notes that the applicant has provided shadow studies which show a clear impact on the property to the west, negatively impacting both light and air on that neighboring property. Further, the proposed addition does not maintain the existing pattern of dog legs along the block.

Two letters of support from both adjacent neighbors have been filed. The ANC 6A Zoning Committee has approved the project and the BZA hearing is scheduled for April 3, 2024.

BZA #21085, 257 Warren Street NE. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's request for an area variance from lot dimension requirements to construct two new, attached, three-story with basements, principal dwelling units in the RF-1 zones.

The applicant is proposing to subdivide (consolidate) 3 non-conforming lots into 2 non-conforming lots and to construct two new dwellings, each with two units. The properties are currently vacant lots.

The Committee feels that the applicant's justification meets the burden-of-proof for an area variance and notes that the proposal has been twice previously approved by the BZA. The BZA hearing is scheduled for March 27, 2024.

Hill East Parcels B1 and B2. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's request for waivers of several design standards and a variance from one design standard required by zoning for the Hill East Zone District.

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April Preservation Café Reveals Our Hidden Alleyways

By Chris Mullins

We are pleased to welcome Kim Prothro Williams, author and architectural historian as our presenter for our April 23 CHRS Preservation Café, “The Hidden Alleyways in Our Midst.”

Washington’s alleyways have always been a fundamental part of the city’s life and economy. Deliberately hidden from public view by the capital’s early planners, DC’s alleys were created to provide access to stables, carriage

houses, and other utility buildings. But as the city grew and property values rose, the nature of some alleys and their buildings changed, resulting in a parallel world of residential, manufacturing, and artistic spaces.

The presentation will be heavily illustrated with historical maps and photos, showing the social and physical history of the city’s alleys and their buildings. Williams is an architectural historian and serves as

the national register coordinator for the D.C. Historic Preservation Office. She is the author of several books, including her most recent one, *Hidden Alleyways of Washington, DC*. We hope you can join us! ★

Join us for this virtual presentation on Tuesday, April 23, 2024 at 6:30pm. CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to members and non-members. Tickets are available on Eventbrite.

Guided Walking Tours for the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

By Joanna Kendig and Beth Purcell

The National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) asked CHRS to offer walking tours of Capitol Hill, as part of their annual meeting held during National Historic Preservation Advocacy week. We were pleased to be asked for a second year in a row. NCSHPO is a nonprofit organization whose members are the State government officials (including the DC SHPO) and their staff who carry out the national historic preservation program as delegates of the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended).

CHRS led conference attendees on two afternoon tours on March 5, 2024. On the Parks tour, Joanna Kendig took the attendees back in time to the creation of Washington in the 1800s, focusing on the development in a small section of the city between Marion and Garfield Parks. Tour

stops included notable buildings: a historically Black church, three school buildings, and a story of a “ghost” hospital, long since demolished.

Next was Square 735 with thirty-two grand Queen Anne row houses built in the 1890s by developer John Waggman, followed by more houses completing the development a mere ten years later. A short walk further took the group to Duddington Place, with its story of development and ties to a family of original landowners in what became Washington, DC. The tour ended overlooking the green lawns and kids playing in Garfield Park with a view to the highway and new apartment buildings to the south.

Beth Purcell led a tour focusing on the history of the Washington Navy Yard and the community that grew up around it. They saw the Latrobe Gate, learned about the British invasion in 1814 and about Black and White Navy Yard workers (carpenters,

blacksmiths, and caulkers), and their role in DC history, including the Snow Riot. Free Black workers built and owned homes and founded a school for Black children. They saw early buildings such as 715 8th Street SE and John Philips Sousa’s birthplace at 636 G Street SE and The Maples, a fine example of Georgian architecture. (If this tour sounds interesting, sign up for the new CHRS walking tour “Civil War and Before.”)

The attendees, hailing from all over the US, were very interested and appreciative of our historic neighborhood and enjoyed seeing where “real” Washingtonians live, work and play. They were also surprised to see blooming cherry blossoms NOT on the Mall and appreciated our lovely parks. CHRS is always happy to showcase our neighborhood and hopes to be part of the NCSHPO conference in the future. ★

“The Capitol Hill Home” Photo Contest Winners

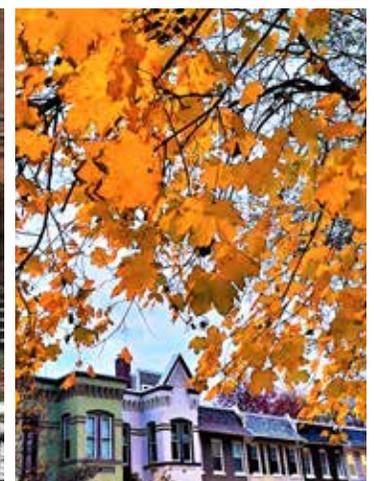
By Elizabeth Nelson

Judging the Capitol Hill Home Photo Contest is always both a challenge and a pleasure, but never more so than this year. We had just shy of 50 entries, many from past winners but quite a few from first-time participants. It seemed like each image was on someone’s list of favorites and we briefly wondered if we’d be able to name a winner.

This year, we’re pleased to announce that Robert Henry’s aerial view of a snow-dusted alley took first place, followed closely by two more wintry scenes: Jon Golinger’s photo of a book box on East Capitol Street and Matt Jex’s image taken a few blocks to the west.

All three photographers will receive a pair of tickets to the Mother’s Day House and Garden Tour, as will Marilyn Saks-McMillion, honorable mention, for her colorful photo of Capitol Hill homes framed by autumn leaves.

Photos from all the finalists are posted on the CHRS website at: chrs.org/2024-photo-contest-winners. Many thanks to everyone who participated—both photographers and judges! To see more winning photos, follow CHRS on Instagram: [@CapitolHillRestorationDC](https://www.instagram.com/CapitolHillRestorationDC). ★



“The Capitol Hill Home” 2024 Photo Contest winners. The winning photo was a snow-dusted alley by Robert Henry (TOP). A snowy scene on East Capitol Street by Matt Jex (MIDDLE) and a portrait of a little library a few blocks down by Jon Golinger (BOTTOM LEFT) tied for second/third place. Honorable Mention went to Marilyn Saks-McMillion for her colorful autumn portrait (BOTTOM RIGHT).

The applicant is seeking to redevelop a portion of the Hill East property on two parcels of Hill East campus with two new buildings: a residential apartment building of approximately 350 units (Building B1) and a mixed-use building with ground floor retail and approximately 144 units above (Building B2). The buildings will be connected by a parking garage below ground and a 24 foot-wide private drive above ground. The property is bordered by Independence Avenue SE, 20th and 21st Streets SE, and Burke Street SE.

The Committee feels that the applicant has proposed a design that is consistent with and promotes the goal of the Hill East Zone District provisions to connect and integrate Reservation 13 with adjacent neighborhoods and the new waterfront park along the Anacostia River. The Committee believes that the developer has provided clear and legitimate justifications for the requested waivers and variance.

An important part of the project design is the creation of a linear park adjacent to Independence Avenue SE along one face of Building B1, dedicated to Robert F. Kennedy. The developer requests a waiver and a variance to accommodate the creation of the linear park. Strict adherence to

zoning requirements would require that Building B1 be built to the property line. That is not possible if a park is to be built along property lines between Independence Avenue and Building B1.

The Committee supports the requested waiver and variance. It feels the linear park is a positive addition to the project since it will buffer Building B1 and pedestrians from heavy traffic along Independence Ave SE where the avenue approaches the Whitney Young Memorial Bridge and will provide an inviting space for pedestrians.

Strict adherence to zoning provisions would require that the ground floor of Building B2 have a minimum clear floor-to-ceiling clearance of 14 ft along the entire length of Burke Street SE. The developer has pointed out that the slope of the property along Burke Street presents an extreme hardship.

Due to the slope of the land, an entire story of interior floor space would have to be sacrificed to achieve 14 ft floor-to-ceiling clearance along the entire block face. The developer is proposing to create a 14 ft clearance along 65% of the Burke Street SE face of Building B2. The Committee feels the developer's design achieves a reasonable compromise that is in keeping with the overall development goals of Hill East zoning provisions.

The Hill East design requirements require that not less than 65% of the ground floor frontage along Independence Avenue SE be devoted to preferred uses such as retail and main building entrances, or to lobbies to offices and residential uses. The developer is proposing to devote the ground floor of B1 to a leasing office, communal workspace, and residential amenity space. The Committee feels that together with the adjacent linear park, the proposed uses on the ground floor will promote the

desired neighborhood feel along the Independence Avenue SE frontage.

The zoning requires that a façade articulation of less than 2 ft is needed to meet the street frontage standards stipulated by the zoning design requirements. The developer is proposing an approximately 3 ft façade articulation for Building B1. The Committee feels that the proposed articulation is appropriate for the scale and location of this building which is located along Independence Avenue SE.

The developer is also proposing a 2 ft façade articulation for Building B2. The developer's choice of brick for the facade results in an articulation of exactly 2 ft. The Committee feels that a waiver from strict adherence to the façade articulation requirements for Building B2 is also appropriate. ★

**Enjoying this newsletter?
Please consider joining CHRS!**

Annual membership is only \$35 and includes the newsletter, a set of historic guidelines, and early access to events, including our annual House and Garden



Tour. Scan this QR code or visit chrs.org for more information.

Spring Walking Tours

By Angie Schmidt

We had fun out in the neighborhood in March providing walking tours! The weather was a little unpredictable but turned out to be just right by the time the tours began.

Our next walking tours will be on Saturday, April 20 and Sunday, April 21 at 1 pm both days. We will offer

tours focusing on architecture, NE alleys and our newest, the Civil War and Before. Tours will not be offered in the month of May due to the House & Garden Tour, but our final spring sessions will be held on June 1 and 2. Tickets are just \$15 via Eventbrite. ★



IMAGES COURTESY ROB SCHMIDT



Participants enjoyed the spring weather on the Notable People Tour on March 24.

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

CHRS wishes to thank the following donors for their invaluable support:

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chrs.org

Mark Your Calendar!

Please check chrs.org for current information—cancellations or postponements will be posted as they are known.



Capitol Hill Restoration Society

APRIL

2 Wednesday, 7 pm *(date change)*
Zoning Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE.

3 Wednesday, 6:30 pm
Spring Membership Meeting, with featured
guest Delano Hunter, Director of DGS.
Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE.

6 Saturday, 2–4 pm
Volunteer Capitol Hill. Meet local volunteer
organizations and explore opportunities at
Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE.

17 Wednesday, 6 pm
Board meeting, Northeast Library,
330 7th Street NE.

20 Saturday & **21** Sunday, 1 pm
Walking Tours by CHRS volunteer tour
guides. Go to eventbrite.com or chrs.org for
details about tours and starting locations.

23 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
Preservation Café: “Hidden Alleyways of
Capitol Hill.” Virtual presentation. Details:
chrs.org/hiddenalleyways-pc.

MAY

1 Wednesday, 7 pm
Zoning Committee, 420 10th Street SE.

6 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

15 Wednesday, 6 pm
Board meeting, Northeast Library,
330 7th Street NE.

28 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
Preservation Café: “100 Years of Eastern
High School.” Virtual presentation. Details:
chrs.org/easternhs100-pc.

JUNE

1 Saturday & **2** Sunday, 1 pm
Walking Tours by CHRS volunteer tour
guides. Go to eventbrite.com or chrs.org for
details about tours and starting locations.

3 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

5 Wednesday, 7 pm
Zoning Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE.

67th Annual CHRS House & Garden Tour

Mother’s Day Weekend • Saturday, May 11, 4–7 pm & Sunday, May 12, 1–5 pm
Tickets on sale! More information at: chrs.org/mothers-day-house-garden-tour.